

## **Historic, Archive Document**

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.



# NUTRITION

For exchange of information on nutrition education and school lunch activities.

# COMMITTEE NEWS

Vol. 1 No. 5

October 1951

Washington, D. C.

A2N955

cop. 4

OCTOBER 24 IS UNITED NATIONS DAY

OCT 17 1951

Kits of materials have been assembled by the National Citizens' Committee for United Nations Day, the anniversary of the day the UN Charter became effective in 1945. The kits have been distributed to UN Day Committees in cities and States. A few are available to other groups. One of the principal objectives of UN Day observance is to call attention to how and where citizens can participate in UN activities the year round. Sources of further information are listed on the enclosure, *New Materials*.

## UN AGENCIES COOPERATE IN FOOD AND NUTRITION PROGRAMS

The United Nations Charter provides for worldwide and interdisciplinary coordination of programs dealing with urgent problems. Of the specialized agencies concerned with nutrition, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) was the first of the permanent UN agencies to come into existence. The second was the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In 1946 the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) were set up.

## JOINT FAO/WHO EXPERT COMMITTEE ON NUTRITION

The close cooperation among UN agencies is exemplified by the setting up of joint committees on nutrition to advise on the nutrition activities of both agencies. Prior to the establishment of a nutrition section in WHO and the official naming of a joint committee, FAO had invited representatives of WHO to participate in the annual meetings of FAO's standing Advisory Committee on Nutrition. The present Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee consists of 10 members, 5 invited by FAO and 5 by WHO.

In general, FAO programs deal with nutrition in relation to the production, distribution, and consumption of food, while WHO considers nutrition in relation to the maintenance of health and prevention of disease. At a meeting at WHO headquarters in Geneva in October 1949, the first Joint Committee considered the nutrition programs of both agencies, recommended certain problems for special consideration, and urged the continuance of close cooperative effort on many of their nutrition activities.

A second Committee meeting was held in April this year at the new permanent FAO headquarters in Rome. Among those invited and attending were two persons from the United States—Dr. Ancel Keys of the University of Minnesota, unanimously elected chairman of that meeting, and Dr. Hazel K. Stiebeling of the U. S. Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics.

*Kwashiorkor*, a nutritional deficiency disease widely prevalent among young children in the tropics, received considerable attention at this meeting. Dr. J. F. Brock and M. Autret presented their report on "Kwashiorkor in Africa," the result of a special FAO/WHO study which had been recommended at the first session. According to their report retarded growth, alterations in skin and hair pigmentation, edema, impairment of the liver, and dermatosis are among known characteristics, but not all may be present. Mortality is heavy if a diet rich in high-quality protein is not provided. Nonfat dry milk is particularly useful in treating kwashiorkor. Attention was drawn to the possibility that deficiency of certain amino acids, particularly methionine, may be a basic causative factor. The consumption of animal protein such as meat, fish, and milk in reasonable quantities is protective. There is some evidence that supplementation with vegetable protein such as beans, peas, and ground nuts is also protective.

The Brock-Autret report on kwashiorkor will be published soon in the WHO bulletin.

A study of the prevention and treatment of *severe malnutrition of civilian populations during war periods* was reported and considered. This report also will appear in the WHO bulletin.

In planning *demonstration area projects*, the Committee recommended that nutrition problems be included. In area projects experts in agriculture, public health, education, or other fields needing attention cooperate in working out practical measures to better the economic



and social conditions in the community, in showing how to carry on the new practices after the experts have left, and in training field workers.

Discussions on *training of workers* brought out the need for more and better trained nutrition workers, the importance of suiting methods and subject matter to existing conditions, and the value of training and experience in their home country for specialists and administrators before going to other countries. The advantages of having a national nutrition institute or a central nutrition service to guide nutrition work in the country and of including nutrition as a subject in medical curriculums were again emphasized.

*A Guide to Nutrition Workers on the Assessment of Nutritional Status*, prepared and to be kept up to date by the Joint Committee, will be helpful to persons in countries with few health and social services as well as those with well-organized ones. Topics covered include the use of vital statistics, growth records of children, weight for height studies, clinical and laboratory tests, general physical examinations, and surveys of dietary patterns and levels of food consumption.

Other subjects considered at this Second Session of the Joint Committee were nutrition of the aged, nutrition and degenerative diseases, anthropometry applied to nutrition, and collaboration of UN specialized agencies with nongovernmental organizations and scientific workers.

## FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION

Technical Assistance activities are receiving a major share of attention by FAO and are interlocked with the regular work of the organization. All requests for assistance are reviewed by the UN Technical Assistance Board and checked with governments offering help in order to prevent duplication and to coordinate programs for fullest benefits.

Assistance consists of working with governments to analyze their problems and set up projects, providing experts to help with the projects, and making fellowships available for more advanced training of leaders. While the work being done is only a small beginning, judged by need, it shows what can be done and serves as a stimulus to further effort.

Of the 405 experts required by all FAO projects approved as of May 1, 1951, 25 were nutritionists and specialists in food management and home economics.

### Technical Assistance in Nutrition, Food Management, and Home Economics

Regional requests for assistance in nutrition, food management, and home economics call for technical help

in organizing nutrition institutes for nutrition officials and in establishing training centers in nutrition and home economics. Projects on which countries are requesting assistance include *planning national nutrition policies* (Finland, Peru, Portugal, and Thailand) . . . establishing and assisting with *school feeding programs* (Finland, Haiti, Indonesia, and Portugal) . . . making *food consumption or nutritional status surveys* (Colombia, Finland, Indonesia, Pakistan, Peru, and Portugal) . . . introducing *low cost and more nutritious foods in diets* (Mexico) . . . carrying on *educational work* (Colombia, Indonesia, and Syria) . . . improving *food technology* (India, Mexico, and Thailand) . . . determining the *composition of native foods* (Finland).

For *training and educating nutrition personnel* countries are requesting travel grants and fellowships to allow qualified technical staff members to study methods used in more advanced countries.

## Other Technical Assistance Projects

In line with the dietary importance of proteins of high biological value, FAO has approved a number of requests from governments for projects designed to increase the quantity or improve the quality of milk, meat, and fish. For example, FAO is supplying an expert to advise the Greek government on breeding, feeding, and

### How a Nutrition Council Can Support UN Activities

A talk on world food problems by Mrs. Florence Reynolds of FAO at a meeting of the Virginia Nutrition Council was followed by group discussion of what a Council and its members can do to contribute to an understanding of and an eventual solution of these problems. The following list of specific activities was drawn up:

1. Keep informed.
2. Tell the public what FAO is doing.
3. Keep public leaders informed of council's interest in the work of FAO.
4. Inform school children as to food needs of other nations.
5. Get school children, church groups, and 4-H club members to prepare puppets and other educational aids for use by nutritionists, missionaries, and teachers in furthering nutrition work in other countries.

housing of cattle, and to assist in the erection and operation of milk processing and pasteurizing plants. Cost of the plants is being borne in part by Greece and in part by the United States. UNICEF is supplying the pasteurization machinery. This project implements recommendations made by an FAO nutrition specialist who spent several years in Greece assisting the government establish permanent nutrition services.

In Afghanistan, Burma, Ceylon, Colombia, Ethiopia, Honduras, and Pakistan, FAO will station veterinarians to assist the governments in controlling animal diseases, thus making it possible to produce more meat and milk and maintain draft animals to speed up production of other foods. Other countries have requested assistance in improving and increasing the numbers of cattle, sheep, and poultry. Brazil, Ceylon, Chile, Ecuador, Haiti, Indonesia, Israel, Pakistan, and Thailand want to improve fish supplies.

Mechanization, modern tools, and improved plant breeding and culture practices are being initiated by many governments. More and better vegetables and grain should result from the work being done in Ceylon, Israel, Pakistan, Syria, and Thailand. Thailand has asked for a nutrition expert to advise on methods of improving nutritive value of rice through processes such as parboiling and enrichment.

Better storage of grain is the concern of Ecuador, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Pakistan, while Iran plans to grow new varieties of grain for improved yield and to better their control of diseases and pests.

Control of diseases in Mexican pineapple, in Saudi Arabian dates, and protection of fruit from pests in Yugoslavia are being worked on.

Basic to increasing agricultural production in many places is assistance provided by FAO in dealing with problems of irrigation, soil erosion, and improved land use. In the case of Ireland, this includes reclamation of marshlands. Increased attention also is being given to procedures of marketing, distribution and processing of food and to credit policies. Honduras proposes to establish a system of supervised credit whereby the farmer is granted loans on condition that he adopt superior varieties of seed and livestock and more scientific farm methods.

### Cooperation with Other Agencies

FAO cooperates with WHO and other UN agencies and with governments in nutrition training programs. Among these may be mentioned the 3-month course in Cairo which included lectures, laboratory and field demonstrations, and practical work in the field . . . the

3½-month institute in Calcutta . . . and the Central American FAO/WHO Nutrition Workers Training Center in Guatemala City at the Institute of Nutrition for Central America and Panama.

FAO is also taking part in area demonstrations along with other UN agencies and governments, as recommended by the Joint Expert Committee on Nutrition. In Egypt a rural improvement program sponsored by FAO is expanding work started by the Health Division of the Rockefeller Foundation, and is concerned with agricultural production, nutritional status, dietary intake, food preparation methods, household equipment, rural handicrafts, and other aspects of home and village life. WHO and UNESCO have been invited to collaborate. This pilot program is expected to yield basic data for improvement of agriculture, not only in the Delta regions of Egypt, but throughout the Near and Far East where similar conditions prevail.

### WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

The UN program of technical assistance has considerably increased WHO's responsibilities in coordinating and providing technical advice and guidance. More and more, WHO's task has become one of assisting governments to assess their health needs and plan programs to meet them, taking into consideration the pace at which improvements can be absorbed and the aid which is available from various sources. Through its regional offices, which have responsibility for working with governments, WHO's programs are now better adapted to local conditions and needs than was formerly possible. Regional offices have been set up in Africa, Southeast Asia, Europe, Eastern Mediterranean, Western Pacific, and the Americas.

For the Americas, the *Pan American Sanitary Bureau* (PASB), established in 1902, acts as the WHO Regional Office. The Bureau's nutrition activities have been directed toward solving nutrition problems of tropical Latin America through their more effective use of local foods. The *Institute of Nutrition of Central America and Panama* (INCAP) in Guatemala City created by Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama, under the auspices of the PASB, and with the assistance of the Kellogg Foundation and other organizations, is serving as a technical center for investigating nutrition problems in the area. As a result of the INCAP program a nutrition laboratory has also been established in Ecuador.

From the information collected in nutritional surveys and laboratory analyses of native foods, INCAP can give guidance in overcoming nutritional deficiencies prevalent in each of the participating countries, employing



locally available resources insofar as possible. Special study is being given to the value of vegetable protein, especially in feeding school children.

The first UN Technical Assistance *Demonstration Area* in the Americas with major emphasis on health has been established in El Salvador at the request of that republic. El Salvador has highly qualified and forward-looking health leaders. The area selected has important health problems and is representative of large regions of Latin America. All aspects of public health, including nutrition, will be integrated with programs in agriculture, labor relations, education, and social welfare. WHO, FAO, UNICEF, UNESCO, International Labor Organization, International Civil Aviation Organization, and UN Technical Assistance will take part. The Government of El Salvador and local communities are planning to contribute considerably more to this project than the international agencies and will use this demonstration area as a testing ground for many of the Government's ideas for general social and economic improvement. The lessons learned will be applied first to a coastal region already selected and then to other parts of El Salvador. Other Latin American countries will probably also profit from the demonstration.

Another type of demonstration project is the eradication by WHO of malaria and other diseases at the same time that FAO is advising on improved agricultural practices to increase food production. Projects at present in Afghanistan, Cambodia, India, Pakistan, Thailand, and Viet Nam are expected to spread to other countries and eventually to affect at least 10 million acres of land now inadequately worked by disease-ridden people.

### **UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION**

Technical assistance programs in fundamental education are being carried on by UNESCO. The first of six world centers has been established in Patzcuaro, Mexico. Its program to combat illiteracy and low living standards is being developed by UNESCO and the Organization of American States with the support of the Mexican Government and the cooperation of FAO, WHO, and the International Labor Organization. Reading is taught in connection with health, homemaking, or agriculture, rather than as an isolated subject. Emphasis is on how to (1) protect health; (2) take advantage of natural

resources; (3) make good use of leisure; and (4) dignify home life.

The purpose of the project is to work out methods and train teachers to apply them, and to develop teaching materials for the Patzcuaro area and other parts of Latin America. It will also prepare for the new literates reading materials which deal with immediate needs in daily life.

Among continuing UNESCO projects are "Food and People" as a world-wide topic of discussion (see New Materials); and the clearing house for exchange of information on how to transmit information from one language group to another and to provide a place where documents may be readily available.

### **UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S EMERGENCY FUND**

UNICEF was established by the UN to aid European children in war-devastated areas with food, clothing, shelter, and medical care. As other emergencies arose, the programs were extended to Palestine, the 1949 earthquake area in Ecuador, and India and Pakistan.

UNICEF's stress at present is on helping countries with long-standing problems, such as the development and expansion of basic maternal and child welfare services, prevention and control of children's diseases, supplementing child-feeding programs, and provision of raw materials for children's clothing and institutional supplies.

In child feeding UNICEF is now working mostly in Asia, Latin America, Greece, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria. The dry milk, fish-liver oil, and other UNICEF foods, with those supplied locally, are used to stimulate interest in better nutrition, particularly as it relates to a better use of the native foods. Another purpose is to encourage use of maternal and child health centers that are being established.

UNICEF's cooperation with other UN agencies has been mentioned in foregoing pages. Its funds have made possible a large part of the work carried on by FAO and WHO. In demonstration-area programs to control malaria and other insect born diseases, UNICEF has collaborated with WHO and FAO in India, Pakistan, and Thailand and has a large share in the El Salvador area program. It also has cooperated in projects to increase countries' milk supplies.